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*Lettson*  
LXXXVII. e. 31 \*

# H I N T S

RESPECTING

*HUMAN DISSECTIONS.*



= Lettson, J.C.

L O N D O N :

P R I N T E D I N T H E Y E A R

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## H I N T S, &c.

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MAN; from the nature of his structure, is heir to innumerable evils. The very phænomena, common to all, of growth and dissolution, render his frame liable to painful revolutions. That structure, formed, as it is, with a wonderful chain of dependent actions of solids and fluids, with ramifications of vessels that elude the most penetrating eye; is, at the same time, exposed to all the vicissitudes of climates and seasons—to infections that float in the air—to poisons from rabid animals\*, and

\* As soon as possible after being bit by a rabid animal, the part should be washed with cold water, for a considerable length of time—so long, that after dropping a little

and venomous reptiles; as well as from the deleterious juices\* of different vegetables;

black ink into the wounded part, the blackness of the ink shall be totally washed off. This may be very conveniently done, by pouring water out of the spout of a kettle, suspended high above the part the strain of water is directed upon: after this, no time should be lost in cutting out the bitten part with a sharp knife or razor—And, as there have been instances, even after these precautions have been adopted, of fatal effects ensuing, it would be adviseable to burn the wound with a hot iron, or with a caustic, such as the lapis infernalis. In those instances where the deleterious effects have supervened, after both cutting out the wound, and cauterizing it with a hot iron, it is probable, that the long fangs of the dog may have passed deeper than the knife or burning-iron has extended; and therefore, for the greater certainty of perfect safety, a stick of the lapis infernalis should be pointed like a dog's tooth, and worked into the bottom and every cavity of the wound, after the use of all the other means of prevention.

*Not less than the introduction of the Nitric acid or Mercure into the bitten part, would be more effectual, certain to save the solid corset.*

\* Laudanum, or tincture of opium, is not only swallowed sometimes in large doses through mistake, but oftener designedly. The first effect is, sleepiness, and torpor gradually spreading over the system, to almost universal insensibility. It is difficult to convey any thing down the throat, when the insensibility is considerable; and in that case, a syringe may be employed, to convey into the stomach a vomit of white vitriol, even to two drachms. From the moment that the accident of taking this poison is discovered, the insensibility must, if possible, be prevented, by rousing the

*Continuation of Note, page 5.*

X The great object, however, should be, to eradicate entirely all rabid infection. The human species, happily, does not communicate the disease like rabid animals; but he will carry infection in his habit much longer than them, before it exhibit its dreadful effects. Within twelve months, I have known two persons die hydrophobic, about eleven months after the bite of the animal: Some Authors mention years; but, in general, the symptoms shew themselves within a few weeks of the accident. Dogs, I believe, never exceed six weeks, and rarely as many days. In order, therefore, to eradicate the disease out of the kingdom for ever, nothing more seems requisite, than, at any period of the year most convenient to dog-owners, to shut up every dog in the kingdom for seven weeks; in which time, every one having received rabid matter, would evince it, and of course be killed. The infection being thus annihilated, to prevent its entrance into the kingdom, in future, every ship having a dog on board, upon entering any British harbour, must submit to the same restraint, of subjecting the dog to seven weeks quarantine. Thus, perhaps, at an expence under fifty pounds, Canine Madness might for ever be excluded from this maritime kingdom. If Cats could be confined to the same quarantine, it would be advisable; but, probably, this animal receives the infection only from the dog.

The above plan was suggested to me, I think by my friend Dr. Bardsley.



bles † ; and not less from exhalations ‡ of the soil he treads upon, and of the minerals § he digs from

the attention of the patient, and shaking him forcibly, to keep him from falling asleep ; for if sleep can be prevented, death will not ensue.

† I think it is Mr. Thicknesse, in his Travels through Spain, who describes a picturesque mode of travelling he adopted in the less frequented provinces of this kingdom, where he might occasionally meet with wild fruits, without being able to ascertain their salubrity. His chaise was drawn by a mule, on whose back was seated a monkey, dressed out like a postillion : whenever he wanted to ascertain the safety of eating any fruit or vegetable with which he was unacquainted, he applied to the monkey ; and whatever this diverting animal chose to eat or refuse, his master did the same, and by this precaution suffered no injury.

‡ In suffocation by noxious vapours, damps, or the air of pits, the person should be removed into fresh air, and cold water should be repeatedly thrown upon the face, drying the body at intervals. The same plan may be adopted in apparent death from lightning—with the addition of slight electrical shocks, if a machine can be procured.

§ Arsenic and Laudanum are the most general poisons made use of by persons who wish to destroy themselves ; and it is hence proper that the means of prevention should be as generally known.—Arsenic itself, when taken into the stomach, is apt to excite vomiting, but not always. Whether this effect be produced, or otherwise, it would

from under him. Numerous and varied as are these sources of destruction, there are others, which, if not equally fatal, are not less painful; from fractures, wounds, and a thousand accidents to which he is exposed; and they all uniformly prove, that Man is a frail being, with incessant claims on humanity for succour.

Of the various stations which the human character assumes, one of the most sublime is that wherein a creature presumes to interpret the will of the Creator. It was hence natural, in the infancy of science, when the anatomical structure of the body, and the action of morbid powers, were equally unknown, to apply to the Ministers of the Divinity for relief: hence Priests

be adviseable to promote full vomiting as soon as possible. The quickest and easiest vomit is white vitriol; and in order to expedite the operation, a drachm at least, dissolved in water or any fluid, may be given. Arsenic being heavy, and liable to get entangled in the rugæ of the stomach, is very difficult to be extricated; but whatever the quantity is that may be evacuated, in that proportion is the danger of life diminished. The stomach should be well supplied with gruel, barley water, or some soft mucillaginous drink, with a quarter of an ounce of liver of sulphur (*hepar sulphuris*) dissolved in each pint or quart of fluid, as liver of sulphur tends to decompose the arsenic, and renders it milder in its effect.

officiated in the temples and public places, in a two-fold capacity; till science in general, and the history of diseases in particular, became more universally cultivated, and better understood; and the medical art constituted a distinct profession, in utility and dignity, inferior to none. Its object is, to aid human misery of every species to which human imbecility is prone. It includes, not only an endeavour to remove disease and pain of body, but also to comfort the afflicted minds of the patient and of his dearest connections; and, even in the melancholy period, when science and solicitude are equally fruitless, to soften that dread separation which each individual is destined to undergo.

To merit and sustain this eulogy, various branches of science must be cultivated, and particularly Anatomy, which implies a knowledge of the constituent parts of the human body, and of its essential functions. No dissection of the brute can convey this knowledge, because Man differs in his organization from every other animal; nor can any delineation of parts, by drawings or prints, suffice. The most ingenious capacity, after the nicest examination

mination of the plan of a building, cannot complete the edifice ; nor can the human structure be known by any other medium than dissection of the human body. Without a knowledge of the parts, the means of remedying the defects incidental to those parts, when under disease, must ever be deficient. As the most ingenious artist, if ignorant of the parts of a compound machine, is incapable of rectifying or restoring its movements ; and no machine is so complicated as the human system ; consequently, anatomical knowledge is essential to medical science in general.

This fact is indubitably established in the mind of every enlightened man : Nevertheless, in the present year, a Bill, entitled *the Dead Body Bill*, was brought into Parliament, and supported by some of its Members ; calculated to augment the impediments to anatomical knowledge, by increasing fines and penalties on procuring dead bodies ! By a perversion of language, this barbarous, because unscientific Bill, was supported under a plea of humanity !—as if it were inhuman to acquire that knowledge which enables one man to remove or mitigate the miseries of another !

Could

Could this knowledge be annihilated by fines and penalties, what would be the consequence to one of these Senators, were he accidentally to break a leg, or fracture the skull? In his anguish, would he not regret the want of that knowledge he had contributed to prevent or impede?

Or, were an affectionate wife, perhaps not formed so favourably for parturition as most of her sex, in her agony, to demand the aid of experience—humanity, weeping over human woe, must turn aside her dejected countenance; for perish must the miserable object under the hand of ignorance.

Not in these instances alone, but in every step of life, from childhood to old age, the knowledge of Anatomy is essential to human comfort; and to prevent the acquisition of this knowledge, is an act of inhumanity: it is a *felo de se* of individual felicity.

In a political view, it would certainly be improvident, as the student of the healing art would hence be compelled to travel to a foreign country, to acquire that knowledge which is denied

denied him in his own ; and probably France would again become the centre of surgical knowledge, if not of medical science.

Indeed, the sensible part of the community have been so fully convinced of the necessity of human dissection, that, instead of augmenting fines and punishments, to prevent the practice of stealing dead bodies, the humane Wilberforce brought a Bill into Parliament a few years ago, the object of which was, I think, to subject malefactors, who should suffer death by the sentence of the law, to dissection. This Bill was rejected by the House of Lords, under a plea, that the terror of dissection was greater, in the view of criminals, than death itself ; and that, by indiscriminate dissection, this terror would be lessened, and the dread of committing crimes be proportionably weakened.

If this reasoning were well founded, it afforded the strongest argument in favour of the Bill itself, as it regards Anatomy ; for, if this superstitious terror were in general removed, the opportunities of dissection would be facilitated and increased. It might at length, probably, be frequently

quently permitted by the friends of patients in general, and particularly of those who might die in hospitals ; but, whilst this terror of dissection is encouraged, it would be equally cruel and impracticable to introduce the practice on hospital patients, without ruining the character of the hospitals themselves. Were patients to enter a ward under the terror of dissection, the very dread of such an event might shorten existence, and prove equally inhuman and fatal. Nor do I know of any method of readily procuring dead bodies, in a free country, whilst this dread pervades the community. The time may come, when the higher ranks may suffer the influence of reason to surmount every obstacle, and permit more frequent dissections among their equals, as the most effectual means of facilitating the practice among the lower individuals of the community.

Fortunately for the Medical Art, the Dead Body Bill alluded to, has not yet acquired the sanction of Parliament : but, should it ever pass into a law, and the heavy fines and penalties, to be enacted by it, prevent the acquisition of subjects for dissection, a society, to

counteract this difficulty, might be instituted, the members of which should engage, that each should be dissected on decease. As the Faculty are peculiarly interested in the promotion of anatomical knowledge, such a society should be first formed among themselves.

One might be led to conclude, by the care taken of dead bodies, and the pomp adopted to convey them, " food for worms," that they were imagined to rise identically again, and inherit immortality. At this period of science, however, it cannot but occur to superficial observation, that the body is compounded of perishable elements, of those substances which it daily takes in for its nourishment ; and therefore, on this ground, it would be as rational to consecrate a dead cow, a calf, or any other food on which the body had lived, and by which it had grown.

To refine on this idea, it would become an investigation of the Physiologist, rather than of the Undertaker or Herald, to give to the deceased the proper funereal accompaniments. Thus, to an Alderman or Common Councilman,

man, might be added a turbot or a turtle, or perhaps a furloin : to a fine lady we should select chicks and syllabubs ; and so on *ad infinitum*, agreeably to previous habit, constitution, or rank ; and, doubtless, each of these are as likely for returning life, as their quondam masters and mistresses who had fed on them.

Although this might be attended with a revolution in Heraldry and Church History, it would have one good effect on the spectator among the tombs, as he might immediately recognize the rank and character of the deceased by the emblematic *insignia*, and thereby even ascertain the causes of death. On a tomb with a fluttering dove might be suggested, that within reposèd a tender love-sick maid : by another, crested with horns, he might be excited to pity or ridicule some unfortunate husband ; and, under a calaphash and calapee, might lie dormant an East India Director, or even a Member of the Board of Controul.

It has been acknowledged, that, in medical experiments, the first essays should be made

on the experimentalist. Storck tried his poisons first on himself, and thereby acquired merited honour. The institution already suggested, is, that the members of the Faculty should unite in a society to dissect one another. At the first association, probably, deaths among themselves might not be adequate to the demands of their numerous pupils ; but, as the society increased, there would be no doubt of a plentiful supply.

Upon entering into this society, each member should be bound ; that, on his decease, his body shall be disposed of, agreeably to the decision of the society at large, or of a committee appointed for that purpose.

It must be a singular pleasure to the members of this society to reflect, whilst living, on the great use they will be of to the community after death ; and that, however mankind may doubt of their utility prior to this event, none can hesitate afterwards to add such a tribute of approbation. They would enjoy the pride and satisfaction of exemption from the common fate of being eaten by worms, these worms eaten by birds and fish, and these birds and fishes

fishes eaten by their friends—a most horrid reflection !

The East and West Indian might perhaps escape the earth-worm, from the greater rapacity of the crabs. These crabs make excellent currie—which the living East and West Indian devours with as much eagerness as the crabs devoured the defunct !

Too many persons, indeed, meet a premature tomb in the watery element \*, and become

\* The directions given by the Humane Society for the recovery of drowned persons, cannot be too generally diffused ; and I shall therefore add here an abridgment of them.

1. Convey carefully the body, with the head raised, to the nearest convenient house.
2. Strip, dry the body, and clean the mouth and nostrils.
3. *Young children*—between two persons in a hot bed.
4. *An adult*—Lay the body on a blanket or bed, and, in cold weather, near the fire : in warm seasons, the air should be freely admitted.
5. It is to be gently rubbed with flannel, sprinkled with spirits ; and a heated warm-pan, covered, may be lightly moved over the back and spine.

6. To

come food for the inhabitants of the turbulent ocean. These, again, may furnish the tables of surviving friends, whose refinement may trace, in a rich cod's head, the lineaments of some honest tar\* ; or, in the delicate whiting,

or

6. *To restore breathing*—Introduce the pipe of a pair of bellows (when no apparatus) into one nostril ; the other, with the mouth, closed—Inflate the lungs till the breast be a little raised ; the mouth and nostrils must then be let free. Repeat this process till *life* appear.
7. *Tobacco smoke* is to be thrown gently into the fundament, with a proper instrument—or the bowl of a pipe covered, so as to defend the mouth of the assistant.
8. The breast to be fomented with hot spirits—if no signs of life appear, the warm bath, or hot bricks, &c.
9. Electricity early employed by a medical assistant.

\* The Writer of this performance was possessed of the jaw of a shark, that, during the bathing in the sea, of some sailors, seized upon the arm of one of them, and tore it from his body. The remains of the unfortunate seaman were brought on board ; soon after which he expired.—A surviving sailor, who had entertained a singular esteem for the deceased, vowed that his friend should be buried with all his limbs, and instantly stripped, and jumped into the sea with a drawn knife in his hand. The shark continued to wallow near the ship ; and the sailor, who was

or gelatinous maid, some *love-sick* female †, who might have preferred the crystal grave to surviving the disappointment of an ardent but flighted affection!—whilst, in the remora, or more brilliant king-fish, some African merchant,

was an expert swimmer, dived under the belly of the shark, into which he plunged his knife. The stroke was renewed; and at length the shark, exhausted by the loss of blood, was drawn to the ship, and the arm of the deceased taken from his stomach. The limb was then sewed up in canvas with the deceased sailor, and decently committed to the waves, after the usual funeral ceremonies.

+ Labat, who says that the Caribs eat human flesh, adds, that they prefer that of an Englishman to a Frenchman or Spaniard, as being more delicate and palatable. The sharks, according to this author, give the English Nation the same preference. *Nouv. Voyage aux Isles*, t. 1, ch. 20, p. 470.—He attributes this preference to the stronger perspiration of the English, and not to the whiteness of their skin, for which they have been long distinguished from other Nations. In the crusades, when people from every part of Europe were assembled together, the English were remarked for the whiteness of their hands; in which respect they still excell all the world.

The Author of *Histoire Morale des Isles Antilles*, ch. 21, p. 537, speaking of the Caribs, says, “*Et disent que les François sont les plus delicats, et les Espagnols les plus durs.*”—In Sumatra, the soles of the feet and palms

chant, or wealthy planter, might recognize the agonizing fibres of a negroe-slave, forcibly torn from native land and every endearing connection, to contribute, whether living or dead, to their luxury and refinement \* !

palms of the hands are preferred. Phil. Transf. v. 6, p. 168. —Martyr says, the Caribs preferred the legs and thighs, but never eat any part of women or girls. The dogs employed by the Spaniards to hunt the Indians, paid the same deference to the female sex. Rech. Philos. v. 1, p. 226.

Antonio de Herrera, in his first Decade, relates, that the famous dog Barémel, whose instinct was singular, guarded a narrow pass in the Island of Hispaniola ; and that, one day, an Indian woman, being desirous of passing by him, addressed him thus : “ Seignior Dog, do not “ hurt me ; I carry this letter to the Christians.” He adds, that “ the dog immediately smelted at her, p——d “ upon her, and suffered her to pass without injury.” Boslu’s Travels, v. 1, p. 11, n. Rech. Philos. sur les Amer. v. 1, p. 78, n. Martyr de Nove Orbe, dec. 1, l. 3, p. 23.

\* It is said, that, from the fatality attending slave-ships, crowds of fish pursue them with singular avidity, in order to feast upon the poor objects who may die, and be thrown overboard into the sea. Barbot, in his Guinea (ch. 17, p. 227), specifies some of these fish that are more particularly fond of the vilest part of the poor slave ; and delicately adds, “ They are nevertheless tolerably good “ meat, when well dressed and seasoned.”

What

What an intellectual enjoyment must these Gentlemen of the Faculty experience, when, instead of having their minds embittered with such cannibal ideas, they view, in distant, but true perspective, the noble ends they gratify ! What a luxury to hope, that, one day, another Monro or Cruikshank may be exhibiting to wondering spectators the beauties of their lymphatics !—a future Abernethy, a bladder with calculi !—and a subsequent Wathen, or Ware, elucidating an optic nerve !

That the society I have been recommending will increase beyond the demand of its members, cannot be doubted, if we consider that the metropolis nourishes with its vitals no less than 100 regular Physicians, 1000 Corporation Surgeons \*, and 1000 Hall Members, besides

\* It is not unusual in Societies, to be at the expence of painting each member who has passed the chair as President. This must afford an excellent hint to the Master, Wardens, and Corporation of Surgeons, who might refine and improve upon it. But, to act with consistency to the surgical art, instead of a painting, the skeleton of each Master might be suspended in the great Hall of the Corporation, where the Masters might thus become

besides irregulars, innumerable as the sands of the sea. When this period shall arrive, the supernumerary subjects may be disposed of to other learned seminaries, or to pupils, at a certain fixed price ; and the profits, which must be considerable, appropriated to the Society for the Relief of the Widows of Medical Men. Then will the honour of this establishment become the theme of public praise and private gratitude. We read of female Hindoos dying for their husbands ; but here the Faculty devote themselves as martyrs for their widows. Lest, however, the wives, from pure gratitude, might be induced, by over-kindness, to hasten this generous catastrophe of their husbands, it must be a part of the plan of the society to make their wives female members; more espe-

useful to the young members, to whom, perhaps, they had before been of none. A distinction so great must certainly produce numerous rival candidates, and perhaps even instigate the Wardens to aspire to the same honour—an honour, however, that should be invariably conferred upon Masters alone, unless the friends of the candidate Warden could prove that the defunct had made some useful discovery in the art. A stimulus of this kind might animate exertion in more ways than eating and drinking at Hall Feasts.

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cially as subjects of this sex may be wanted in the dissecting theatre, more than, perhaps, coveted at home ; and certainly nothing can be a sweeter death than dying for surviving widows, and perhaps for the benefit of future wives ; and it is also well known that the tender sex, at least when eternally silent, will raise more money than the other sex.

Here, again, the intellectual pleasures must be highly gratified. In one vial, hermetically sealed, might be inclosed the susceptible female heart, that fluttered and changed at every vow. Another preparation might exhibit the opacity of a once rolling and lucid eye, and force upon reflection the changeableness of all sub-lunary objects : and still more sedative to sober thought would the widower feel himself in his arm-chair, with a pipe, and a neat stopper made of the fore-finger\* of his dear dissected rib ;

\* Frazier says, that the Chilese make use of the bones of their captives for flutes, and of their skulls for dishes to drink out of; p. 64. Father Hennepin makes the same observation, in his History of a New Discovery—So, likewise, does Gem. Careri, Voy. du tour du Monde, t. 5,

rib ; and the tongue dried, and dormant, under a bell-glass, fixed on a mahogany frame—a tongue which, now silent, heretofore never was at rest.

ch. 6, p. 68 ; and the Jesuit's Letters by Lochman, v. 1, p. 94. The King of the Huns, in combat, killed the King of Yve-chi, whose skull was used as a vessel upon all grand ceremonies : Hist. Anc. des Peuples de l'Europe, t. 3. Careri says, he saw St. John the Baptist's skull at the Greek Mount at Jerusalem, which, he says, he worshipped ; l. 1, ch. 9. And Abbé Fortis, in his Dalmatia, mentions, that the islanders of Arbe, in the Gulph of Quærnaro, pretend to possess the heads of Shadrech, Meshech, and Abednego ; p. 348. Lucius Florus relates, that the Thracians made use of the skulls of their captives, to drink libations to the gods ; l. 3, ch. 4.—All which evince, that bones have long been employed in very interesting and important offices, instead of being buried, and lost to the community.

Valuable, indeed, must have been the skull of the barbarian, when the English have even offered one hundred pounds for the scalp only of an Indian : (Hutchinson's History of the Colony of Massachusets Bay.) It may be presumed, that the whole head of even a learned European would not sell for half the sum of the forehead only of an Iroquois, and which is three times more than the purchase of a whole Hessian, who was estimated, during the American war, at thirty pounds ; and, paltry as the sum is, some Members in Parliament had the hardiness to oppose even this cheap purchase.

The

The society thus constituted, and, of course, supplying supernumerary subjects, whose members, naturally shocked at the ignoble practice of burial, would turn their attention to make the best use of these supernumeraries, and would of course advert to the economical invention of turning husbands and wives into candles and soap, by a chymical process\*.

This

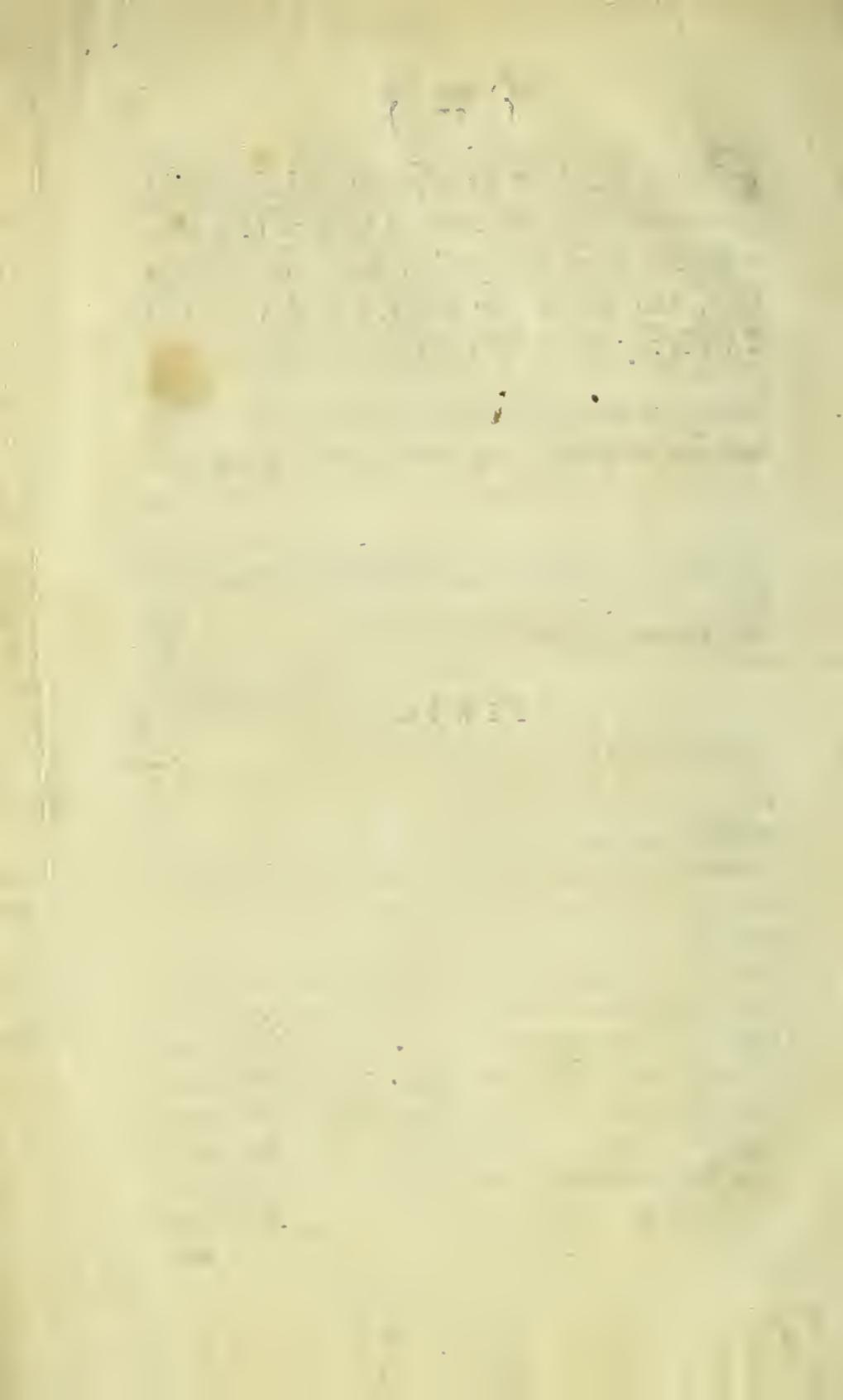
\* Accident has afforded many instances, in proof of animal substances being changed into a waxy matter, not unlike sperma ceti, which is capable of making candles and soap. In consequence of this matter resembling sperma ceti recently found in the church-yard of the Innocents at Paris, M. Fourcroy has given an analysis of it, in the eighth volume of the Annales de Chemie, Memoir the second. The method of effecting this change with facility, is since described by Mr. Gibbes, in the Philosophical Transactions of London. In June he buried a cow, in a place where, from the rising of a river to supply a mill twice a day, it was submitted to the action of running water. On taking this cow up in December, he found, that where the water was constantly running over it, there it was changed into a fatty substance; but, where the water which had acted on the matter could not pass off, a very disagreeable smell was sensible, and the flesh was not so much changed. A piece of this cow, that was perfectly lean, was struck through with a stick, and fastened to the bottom of the river: this piece was perfectly changed into

This must be not only highly beneficial to the revenue, and serve the poor in general, but doubtless afford singular elucidation to many dark and knotty points in Philosophy ; for, what could withstand the brilliancy of a young widow turned into an illuminated chandelier, with streams of vivid light from fingers and toes, and splendour to dazzle from the eyes ? Perhaps, the glimmerings of an old woman might not pay for labour, or at the least might light the kitchen-fire, or the tobacco-pipe alluded to ; but this loss would be refunded by the soap manufactured from an old shrew, where no leys would be re-

into a fat matter, and had lost its offensive smell. He adds, " I have brought about this change in a much shorter time, in the following manner : I took three lean pieces of mutton, and poured on them the three mineral acids ; and I perceived, that, at the end of three days, each was much altered : that in the nitrous acid was much softened, and, on separating the acid from it, I found it to be in exactly the same state with that which I had before got from the water ; that in the muriatic acid was not, in that time, so much altered ; the vitriolic acid had turned the other black." See Appendix to the Critical Review, new Arrangement, vol. 13, p. 536.

quisite to heighten its asperity and absterging powers—whilst the almond softness of a once mild and bland companion would mollify the skin, and supple the pores. And with this I wash my hands off the interesting subject.

F I N I S.











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